



THE NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT  
REGIONAL PLANNING COLLABORATIVE

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TO: Appropriations Committee

FROM: The Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative

RE: **Support for the \$15M Tourism Budget**

We urge the state to continue its commitment to tourism marketing by approving the \$15 million investment in an industry that rapidly puts revenue back into Hartford's coffers as well as raising much needed revenue for towns across the state.

We are the Northwestern Connecticut Regional Planning Collaborative, a non-profit organization working on behalf of eight of the smallest towns in Connecticut: Cornwall, Canaan (Falls Village), Goshen, Kent, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury and Sharon. Our landscape includes the Appalachian and Mohawk trails; rafting and kayaking on the Housatonic River; biking trails that pass lakes, farms and small mountain vistas; some of the best fly fishing in the Northeast; downhill and cross-country skiing and markets for locally grown produce, dairy and meat. We have an abundance of cultural venues including the Lime Rock Park Race Track, Sharon Playhouse and Goshen Fairgrounds. Our shopping opportunities for visitors include locally owned stores and galleries. We have no big box stores.

We cherish our small town way of life, but we are keenly aware that bringing visitors to our region is vital to the economic stability of our village centers. Almost 20% of our hospitality related businesses need visitor trade to survive<sup>i</sup> Our small towns have a declining full time population, thus our full time customer based is shrinking and needs to be supplanted by visitors to our region.<sup>ii</sup>

Last spring the Collaborative turned to Connecticut Commission of Culture and Tourism for funding to launch a website, [discovernwct.com](http://discovernwct.com) that is linked to the state's [ctvisit.com](http://ctvisit.com). This modest investment by the state last fall in local tourism has a multiplier effect in our towns. Besides raising our visitor profile, the site has made our merchants and town officials aware that a regional approach to marketing is essential--our towns are all too small for the go-it-alone approach. Our other visitor - focused initiatives include state approved signs that inform the visitor that there are shops, restaurants etc. in this town; "Get Lost" a colorful brochures that is now in stores throughout our region and now in its second printing will be in the state five Welcome Centers.

From our vantage point tourism is a segment of our small town economies where smart investment decisions result in additional town and state revenue and increased job

creation. We urge you to spend wisely by maintaining your \$15 million investment in CT tourism for the sake our state's future.

*Jocelyn Ayer*, Director

*Ruth Skovron*, Co-founder

*Pat Mechare*, First Selectman Town of Canaan and Collaborative Co-founder

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<sup>i</sup> Northwest CT Regional Planning Collaborative/ Village Center Vitality Program, "Current Conditions Report," July 2010, p.4

<sup>ii</sup> Northwest CT Regional Planning Collaborative/ Village Center Vitality Program, "Current Conditions Report," July 2010, p.4